

Poolroom Dance Against Trump

a comedy sketch idea by Jonathan D Steinhoff ©1.27.17

Pool hall sign in Exterior Shot indicates scene is in New York City at an Upper Westside poolroom. Inside the poolroom the POOL PLAYERS are a mixture of men, women and teenagers playing pool or watching others, most appearing to be upper middleclass, having a good time. The sound from the poolroom TV is almost incoherent, except for the word “Trump”, which makes it through, infrequently at first (through some kind of sound processing for the sketch, a little like Miss Othmar the teacher in the Peanuts cartoons). Each time the name “Trump” is heard on the TV, the lighting in the room seems to dim and change color ominously, the mood of the POOL PLAYERS darkening on cue as well.

Next, the sound of the name “Trump” on the TV causes the POOL PLAYERS to exchange looks with each other and shake their heads, at first only with those at their own pool table, but gradually with everyone in the room, so that the entire room evolves into a choreographed scene. In the beginning the POOL PLAYERS mutter “Trump” under their breath on the beat following the sound of his name on the TV. Then their unified chant of “Trump” in disgust grows louder, their rhythms more sophisticated, e.g., first the men, then the ladies, then just the men and ladies on one side of the room, the next beat the name is chanted on the other side of the room, then everyone in the whole room together, etc., etc. It gradually develops that each POOL PLAYER is sent into an expressive dance, sometimes dancing the same way in unison, other times the dance being a more individual expression. Increasingly the sound of his name from the TV is unnerving the POOL PLAYERS rather than simply causing disgust, until with each utterance of Trump’s name on the TV, the pool table felt is ripped by people taking shots, pool sticks are accidentally hurled across the room. The scene feels tribble, but expressive, perhaps too intellectually expressive for dance, ala Jules Feiffer. Some seem fearful of being seen by some invisible eye, using whispers, improvised hand gestures and sign language in their dance, these individuals afraid they mustn’t communicate their shared feeling too loud in public, others expressing more outright defiance in their dance. There is a beating drum somewhere, growing faster and more intense as Trump’s name is heard on the TV with rapidly increasing frequency. The DRUMMER turns out to be the guy who runs the poolroom, usually seen behind the counter, banging on a big kettle drum, eventually coming out from behind the counter and moving about the room while beating the drum, as the choreography intensifies. Cue balls start flying off the table, so unnerved are those playing whenever they are taking their shot at the moment Trump’s name is heard (note to Lorne: tennis balls). Finally the drumming stops and the TV is shut off by the DRUMMER, who points at the clock and a sign, showing everyone it’s closing time. This abruptly halts the dance, and the POOL PLAYERS silently, glumly, their heads pointed at the ground, leave the poolroom. While exiting a BIMBO-ESQUE WOMAN chewing gum suddenly says in a heavy New York accent, “I don’t think Trump’s so bad, I like that part where he goes, hey China, kiss my you know what, right?” All the POOL PLAYERS within proximity of BIMBO-ESQUE WOMAN are jolted by this, momentarily shooting her a glare before resuming their glum staring at the ground as they continue out the door of the poolroom.

THE END